



# THE NETWORKER

BELTANE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT NETWORK – MAKING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

## Meet the Fellows

“The Fellowship has reshaped how I think about, and do, research and opened numerous opportunities to take on exciting projects” – Find out how our Fellows have put their learning to work.

## Platforms to Engage

Our researchers have been sharing their work with new audiences by proposing dangerous ideas, doing stand-up comedy, conversing for an hour, telling tales and working with youth theatre.



## What is the Beltane Public Engagement Network?

The Beltane Public Engagement Network (the Beltane) is a network for people interested in making academic research accessible to a wide variety of audiences.

Since 2012, the Beltane has been supported by four Edinburgh universities: The University of Edinburgh, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh Napier University and Queen Margaret University. From its foundation in 2008 until 2012, the Beltane was funded by Research Councils UK, the Funding Councils, and the Wellcome Trust as part of the UK Beacons for Public Engagement initiative. The Beltane is the only Beacon to continue its cross-university partnerships after the end of the initial funding.

The Beltane uses a deliberately broad definition of 'public engagement'. As well as helping to engage people who may have a personal interest in academic research, the Beltane also supports engagement with policymakers and practitioners. The proximity of the Scottish Parliament continues to inform much of the Beltane's work; the project also has established links to Edinburgh's major cultural institutions. Community engagement is an area where the Beltane team is beginning to develop expertise and contacts.

## The Institute for Academic Development (IAD)

The IAD is a central university department which supports staff and student development. The Beltane joined the IAD in the summer of 2012, beginning a gradual process of embedding support for public engagement into the core provision for staff and students at the University of Edinburgh. Academic developers at Heriot-Watt, Edinburgh Napier and Queen Margaret universities work in partnership with the Beltane team, and all university partners take turns to host the Beltane's training and development activities.



# THE TEAM

The Beltane's small team is based in the University of Edinburgh's Institute for Academic Development (IAD). The core of the Beltane Public Engagement Network Team is formed by Heather Rea and Sarah Anderson. Together they outline, implement and disseminate the Network's wide range of initiatives. Be it comedy nights, dangerous cabarets, or very serious Parliament dinners, there seems to be very little eluding this dynamic duo.



**Heather Rea**  
*Project Lead*

Heather initially continued family tradition by becoming an engineer. Arriving in Edinburgh from Canada via Ireland, she settled into a PhD at Edinburgh Napier University. In fact, the only Beltane partner university Heather hasn't worked or studied at (yet) is Queen Margaret! It was during her eleven years as Research Associate at Heriot-Watt University that Heather got involved with delivering activities at the Edinburgh International Science Festival. Public engagement turned out to satisfy both the extrovert side of Heather's character and her need for retail therapy (science outreach activities need all sorts of kit not on the usual university inventory). In hindsight, it is no surprise that Heather was leading the Edinburgh Beltane Beacon for Public Engagement within a few years.

What defines Heather's work at the Beltane is her commitment to creating new opportunities for researchers to communicate their work to different audiences. Never afraid to take a seemingly big risk, Heather was responsible for plunging Edinburgh's researchers into the world of stand-up comedy in the form of Bright Club. For Heather, though, the risks are illusory, because she knows exactly what researchers are capable of even when they don't:

**"I am constantly overwhelmed by the combined brilliance and modesty of the researchers in our partnership. Researchers often seem not to realise how interesting and valuable their work is, and how much of a contribution they can make to society simply by sharing and listening."**

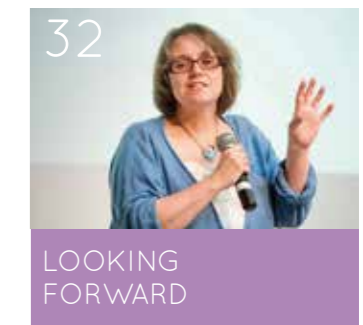
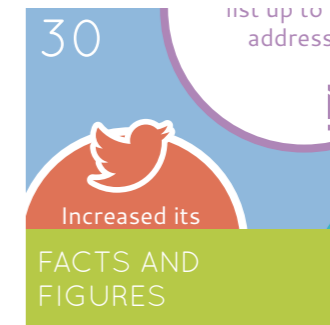
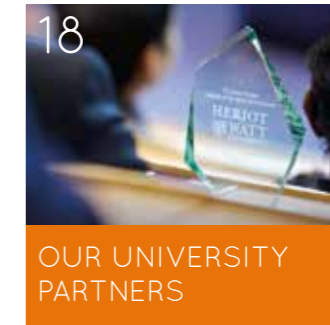
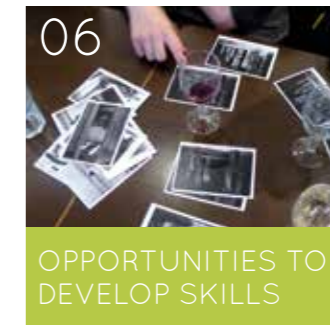
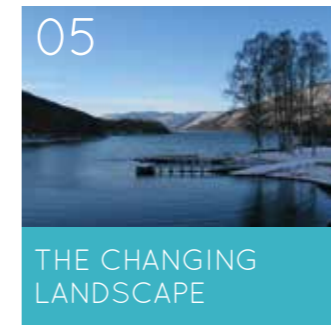


**Sarah Anderson**  
*Project Officer*

**"The best part of working for the Beltane is being able to try new things. For institutions that are the home of pioneering discoveries, universities can have surprisingly risk-averse cultures. If we're going to get better at what we do, we need welcome failure and what it teaches us."**

Energy, enthusiasm, and creativity define the work of Sarah Anderson, the Beltane's Project Officer. Sarah leads the core of the Beltane Network's diverse communication activities, drawing from her enjoyment of writing, which she developed thanks to a degree in English language and literature and a PhD in English language. She manages the Network's presence on social media, the organisation of training and networking events, and the dissemination of the Network's activities. Sarah has spent almost her entire adult life working or studying at the University of Edinburgh, which is handy when it comes to knowing how to get things done.

One of Sarah's favourite parts of working for the Beltane is trying out new event venues. In the last year alone, these have included Edinburgh's Grassmarket Community Project, Summerhall and even a Spiegel tent. Her next plan is to brave the Scottish weather and take us all outdoors!



## The Beltane Community

The Beltane's staff act as brokers for knowledge and contacts. The success of the Network is completely reliant on the researchers, university public engagement staff and colleagues from outside academia who choose to get involved. Some of the ways members of the Beltane community help one another are:

- Sharing examples of their public engagement activities at the Beltane's Annual Gathering event
- Offering one another tips on different aspects of public engagement at the Beltane's Breakfast and Twilight networking sessions
- Taking over the running of long-standing activities like the Bright Club Edinburgh stand-up comedy night
- Sharing with us their contacts (for example, their media contacts)
- Giving their time, for free and on weekends, to act as judges for public engagement competitions

Most importantly of all, our researchers do the research in the first place!

Without the research, there would be nothing with which to engage people. The excellent quality of the research produced means there is scope for excellent engagement.

The Beltane is guided by an advisory group of fourteen people, all listed on page 4. Many members are academic or support staff with responsibility for public engagement at their university. We are given perspective by: our 'public' representative Sophie Dow, a journalist, mother-of-two and the founder of the learning difficulties charity Mindroom (<http://www.mindroom.org/>); our Scottish Government representative, Joanne Ward; by Donald Jarvie of the Scottish Parliament's Futures Forum; by Stuart Monro, who is Scientific Director of Our Dynamic Earth (among many other things). All of our advisory group members are very busy people, but they all take a considered interest in the Beltane's current activities and future plans.

The Beltane now works with a community of over thirty Beltane Fellows. Once you're a Beltane Fellow, you're part of the Beltane community for life! During their Fellowship, Fellows are supported by the Beltane to undertake public engagement for one day each week for six months. Once their Fellowship ends, the hope is that the Fellows will continue to act as ambassadors for public engagement in their own academic departments, spreading the message much wider and more convincingly than the core Beltane team could on its own. You can read more about our Fellows on pages 10-15 and 29.





“A key agent of change has been the serious commitment of the national funding bodies and research councils for universities and researchers to engage with the public about what they are doing and why.”

## A PERSONAL REFLECTION

Engaging with the public about research has always been part of my activity as a biologist. Since I first came to the University of Edinburgh, my team has contributed to the Edinburgh International Science Festival activities run by the University and supported activities in schools. I was also actively involved with Science and Plants for Schools (SAPS), a UK-wide project, and the Scottish Schools Equipment Resource Centre (SSERC).

The transition to even more active engagement came with a booklet we produced following some interactive activities about stem cells and developmental biology. With BBSRC support, that booklet has been used as a resource for teachers across the UK, reaching thousands of young people.

I wanted to do much more; the foresight of the Darwin Trust of Edinburgh allowed me to do this for biotechnology – they funded the set-up of the Scottish Initiative of Biotechnology Education (SIBE) in 2001. In parallel, I had been heavily involved in the development of skills for postgraduate students at the University of Edinburgh, and more widely in the sector. These two strands came together and we began organising, on behalf of the University,

the whole contribution made by the Colleges of Science and Engineering and Medicine and Veterinary Medicine to the Science Festival. This enabled large numbers of staff and students to engage directly with a broad family audience.

SIBE and our Science Festival work led, in turn, to the University of Edinburgh applying for – and winning – the funding for the Edinburgh Beltane. The purpose of the Beltane was to encourage and support researchers in all disciplines to engage with the wider public, and to help researchers develop the skills to do this effectively. There was also the wish that the Beltane would facilitate evidence-based policy making. The Edinburgh Beltane involved the four universities in Edinburgh (the University of Edinburgh; Heriot-Watt; Edinburgh Napier; Queen Margaret), plus the University of the Highlands and Islands and a variety of cultural and policy organisations.

By working across a range of partners, all of whom had significant experience of public engagement, the Edinburgh Beltane could reach a wide range of audiences and overcome disciplinary silos. By encompassing five universities, the Edinburgh Beltane was also attractive to external institutions, such as the Scottish Parliament, who wished to engage with higher education institutions. In this respect the Beltane was, and is, unique in Scotland. I was delighted that, following

the end of external funding in 2012, four of our partner universities committed to funding a continuation of the Edinburgh Beltane. The Beltane Public Engagement Network will run until at least the summer of 2015.

Over this long time, I have seen public engagement activities become much more professional, better targeted to audiences, more and more interactive and, in some cases, a real dialogue with the audience. The innovative activities of the Edinburgh Beltane and Beltane Network have helped this happen, not just at the partner universities in Edinburgh, but across Scotland and the UK. More and more people see the real value of wider engagement. A key agent of change has been the serious commitment of the national funding bodies and research councils for universities and researchers to engage with the public about what they are doing and why. Indeed, the funding of the Edinburgh Beltane (and sister projects around the UK) demonstrates funders' commitment to public engagement with research.

It is a real pleasure to go to events where there is a mix of disciplines. For example, the bringing together of social scientists, scientists, medics and carers is so much better for the researchers, the public and, ultimately, the research: it is at the boundaries that exciting new research develops.



“The purpose of the Beltane was to encourage and support researchers in all disciplines to engage with the wider public, and to help researchers develop the skills to do this effectively.”

My final observation, though I could write a book, is how exciting it is to see recognition of public engagement as a valuable thing to do and a key part of academic life. The awards, recognition and changed promotion criteria are real evidence of how far this agenda has moved in the last twenty years. A word of caution though: the processes are often in place but everyone is not totally on board yet; public engagement could still suffer setbacks as resources get tight and some people still see it as peripheral or a nice 'add on', rather than key to future research funding sustainability.

Nonetheless, with this general direction of travel, and the embedding of the Beltane in the Institute for Academic Development at the University of Edinburgh, I see a bright future: publics more engaged with and valuing researchers, with research being more accessible and relevant as a result. I see many more links with the community, and different groups approaching the University about engaging with us. I look forward to seeing the innovative new ways the Beltane will develop for us to grow our interactions with a wider and wider range of audiences. I especially look forward to us working more and more in partnership with others to share what we are doing and why it matters.

Once you fully commit to engaging the wider community with what you do, it leads you into new areas that are a real challenge. My current role included development and alumni engagement. I felt as I learnt more that it wasn't very clear to people either in the University or outside it just how much philanthropic giving had shaped the University through its history. So I decided research was needed, and a book. With an excellent co-author in Jean Grier and input from staff and student interns, the book – *Private Giving, Public Good* – is now with the publishers.

Another area was even more outside of my expertise. I worked with a small start-up company Luma3Di to develop an app which charts the history of the site where our iconic Old College stands. The idea for this came from me chairing the project board for the landscaping of the quad and the amazing archaeology that was uncovered. I wanted to share this in an accessible way and Luma had just the right technology. They use Augmented Reality – it's kind of like 3D pop-ups that appear on your iPad that you can rotate and look at buildings and objects from many angles. Now there is a free app for anyone who wants to see it, and I didn't even know what Augmented Reality was a year ago.

**Mary Bownes**  
Senior Vice Principal (External Engagement),  
The University of Edinburgh



## BELTANE ADVISORY GROUP 2012-2014



**Mary Bownes**

Mary is Senior Vice Principal (External Engagement) at the University of Edinburgh.



**Charlie Jeffery**

Charlie is Vice Principal (Public Policy and Impact) at the University of Edinburgh and Director of the University's Academy of Government.



**Lesley McAra**

Lesley is Head of the School of Law at the University of Edinburgh.



**Bob Fisher**

Bob is Dean of Research for the College of Science and Engineering at the University of Edinburgh.



**Joanne Ward**

Joanne is Head of Science and Society in the Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser at the Scottish Government.



**Alan Miller**

Alan is Deputy Principal (Research & Knowledge Transfer) at Heriot-Watt University.



**Gráinne Barkess**

Gráinne is Researcher Developer at Edinburgh Napier University.



**Isobel Davidson**

Isobel is Professor in the School of Health Sciences at Queen Margaret University.



**Sophie Dow**

Sophie is a journalist and founder of Mindroom (<http://www.mindroom.org/>).



**Donald Jarvie**

Head of Scotland's Futures Forum, The Scottish Parliament.



**Stuart Monro**

Stuart is Scientific Director of Our Dynamic Earth.



**Sarah Cunningham-Burley**

Sarah is Head of the School of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences at the University of Edinburgh.



**Heather Rea**

Heather is Project Lead for the Beltane Public Engagement Network.



**Jon Turner**

Jon is Director of the Institute for Academic Development at the University of Edinburgh.



## THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE

In 2008, the Beltane Public Engagement Network began life as the Edinburgh Beltane Beacon for Public Engagement. The Edinburgh Beltane was one of six university-based collaborative projects – 'Beacons' – that sought to change for the better the culture of public engagement in UK higher education institutions. The Beacons won funding because they could all show examples of great engagement activities going on in their partnership. The majority of these activities were 'grassroots' inspired and led, and the researchers involved had little awareness of what was going elsewhere. The Beacons were funded by the UK higher education funding councils, Research Councils UK (RCUK), and the Wellcome Trust.

External funding for all of the Beacons projects ended in 2012; in that time, they had all contributed to raising the profile of public engagement in their partner institutions and sharing best practice across the country.

As the initial six projects came to an end, it became clear that more work was needed to embed a culture of public engagement in universities. In response to this, RCUK funded the Public Engagement with Research Catalysts: eight projects, each hosted by a single university. The Catalysts scheme targeted universities that did not benefit from the initial Beacons funding.

The National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), which was founded at the same time as the Beacons, is continuing to help more and more universities engage. Any university can receive support from the NCCPE; in addition, the initiative undertakes specific projects, including supporting the Catalysts. The NCCPE is a forum through which former Beacons and current Catalysts can share their learning.

Support staff, academic researchers and public engagement professionals have formed a friendly and supportive UK-wide professional network, helped by an increasingly established circuit of conferences. The British Science Association's annual Science Communication Conference and the NCCPE's Engage event are

calendar fixtures. More locally, the Knowledge Exchange Scotland Conference now dedicates a greater portion of its programme to non-commercial activities, and the 2013 Research Futures Conference had the theme of public engagement. Within Europe, the Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF) raises the public profile of science and creates opportunities for dialogue about the role of science in society.

Awards recognising achievement in public engagement are now being presented within universities and beyond. The Royal Society of Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt University continue to award their prizes for public engagement (both were established with support from the Beltane). In 2014, the NCCPE received a hearty response to its one-off competition to find and celebrate the UK's best examples of public engagement with research. The Beltane Network itself was runner-up for its work to support early-career researchers at the 2013 Times Higher Education Awards.

The funding climate has changed since the Beltane and its counterparts were established in 2008. Dedicated pots of money for public engagement have decreased among the major funders; instead, money for public engagement must now be requested as part of larger grants. This encourages academics to integrate well-planned public engagement into their research from the outset, rather than treating it as an afterthought. As part of the funding process, the UK Research Councils now require researchers to complete a document called "Pathways to Impact"; this encourages applicants to make clear plans for maximising the potential impact of their research, and this may influence funding decisions.

In the past few years, the lives of UK academic researchers have been dominated by the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the process for assessing the research done in UK universities. Understandably, work on the REF has limited the time researchers and support staff have to spend on developing their public engagement activities. Now that the assessment is over, there is more time to develop the new relationships, skills and formats and that will maximise the benefit of our research to society.



# OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP

# SKILLS

## RESEARCH, RESEARCHERS AND THE MEDIA

Graham Turner, Director of Research and Chair of Translation at Heriot-Watt University, attended the Beltane's media training in May 2014. Less than three weeks later, it had paid off!



Graham H. Turner  
20 May

Any minute now, Heriot-Watt's Insign project features on the BBC World Service *Click* programme. This is a direct result of the Beltane's recent media training weekend. What's that, 20 days from training to global coverage? Is this a record? Thanks Beltane!

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldserviceradio>



Shyamanga being awarded his Three Minute Thesis certificate by entomologist, author, academic, TV presenter and explorer George McGavin

## THREE MINUTE THESIS

Shyamanga Borooah won the 2013 Three Minute Thesis (3MT) heat run for the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine at the University of Edinburgh. Of the competition, Shyamanga says:

*"The Three Minute Thesis enabled me to distil the main essence of my research and package it in a way that allows the public to understand the key aims, methods and findings of my work in a manageable bitesize talk."*

*"It is clear that the skills used for scientific presentations do not translate well to this shorter format. Fortunately, I have been exposed to some excellent training organised by the Beltane Network. In particular, sessions with Michael Hargreaves and Tom Pringle helped equip me with tools which eventually helped me win the section final."*

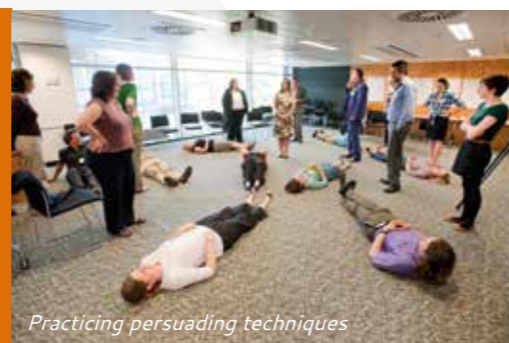
Shyamanga is currently Rowling Scholar, Wellcome Trust and Scottish Medicine and Therapeutics Clinical Research Training Fellow and Honorary Ophthalmology Registrar at the University of Edinburgh.

## IMPACT AND INFLUENCE COACHING

Clare Taylor, a lecturer and principal investigator in medical microbiology at Edinburgh Napier University, attended the Beltane's Impact and Influence workshop in February 2014:

*"The coaching course "Impact and Influence: A Course for Public Engagement Ambassadors" was a fantastic experience expertly facilitated by Pete and Andrew of VOX Coaching. It was amazing to see demonstrations of how body language and voice tones translate into impact, or not, when engaging with others. The course was a real eye-opener and has definitely influenced how I engage with others professionally to try and make sure I create the impact I intend to."*

*"I also learned a valuable lesson about the importance of rehearsal which will stand me in good stead for my upcoming show at the Edinburgh Fringe as part of the Beltane's "Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas". I can't recommend this course highly enough!"*



Practicing persuading techniques



Clare Taylor

## TEDx UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

Lesley McAra, Head of the School of Law at the University of Edinburgh, was part of the first TEDx University of Edinburgh in February 2013:

*"Speaking at TEDx Edinburgh 2013 was one of the most exciting and terrifying moments in my career! The build up to the event was an exemplar in building a community of practice between staff and students. All speakers were given coaching by a theatre director and took part in a masterclass – at which we were critiqued on our performance in front of an audience of students. Although I have over twenty years' experience of public speaking, I still have a great deal to learn (advice given by the director was: speak slower, lose the notes, lose the PowerPoint, lose the glasses!)."*

*"Taking this journey with students was fun, supportive and insightful. The two student speakers were outstanding. Both were able to communicate with passion, knowledge and insight on the issues of homelessness and the environment."*

*"As an academic at the University of Edinburgh, I strongly believe that the University should utilise its research and 'institutional capital' for the benefit of the city, the nation and the wider world. The Beltane Network and TEDx events provide the requisite architecture which enable our scholarly community to achieve such goals."*



TEDx University of Edinburgh is a student-led initiative. You can read more about it at <http://tedxuniversityofedinburgh.com/>.



Lesley McAra

Want to be the next media star, deliver an inspiring talk, or engage your audience in dialogue? Sign up to our email list to find out when the next courses will be: <http://www.beltanetwork.org/discover-beltane/email-alerts/>



## CAFÉ DES ARTISTES

Neil Cox (History of Art, The University of Edinburgh) shares his experience of bespoke training delivered by the Beltane:

*"As Director of the ARTIST ROOMS Research Partnership (which includes Tate and National Galleries of Scotland), I contacted the Beltane in October 2013 to discuss a bespoke public engagement training course. The session was to support a new programme of public evening discussions of contemporary art, branded "Café des Artistes"."*

*"The result was a one-day training course which ran in November 2013. It was attended by sixteen PhD students and staff, and focussed on approaches to dialogue with diverse audiences about difficult or complex material. MSc intern Hannah Hamblin recruited the attendees from across the University of Edinburgh's College of Humanities and Social Science."*

*"The training day was incredibly rich and rewarding for all participants, with a great variety in presentational methods. It also provided a platform for discussing the planned "Café des Artistes" series in more depth, considering not only the overall vision, but everything from format to venue and catering as well. Several PhD students who were also part-time teachers commented afterwards on the usefulness of some of the exercises for teaching as well as for public engagement."*

*"The first "Café des Artistes" event took place in early December 2013 at the Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh, with over ninety participants at its peak. A further five Cafés were held over the academic year, with the last two at the Fruitmarket Gallery. The final Café, on the artist Vija Celmins, was also a technological first: a live webcast link with the Taigh Chearsabhagh Museum and Arts Centre on North Uist, which was hosting a Celmins show, enabled public participants there to tweet questions back to Edinburgh."*

*"Audience surveys revealed very positive responses to discussion and to the general format. There is no doubt that the Beltane training day had both concrete impact on the approach taken to the events, and also gave a boost in terms of confidence and clarity of thinking in the team. We intend to repeat the training day for the 2014/15 "Café" series."*



You can read about past events in the "Café des Artistes" series at: <http://tinyurl.com/CafeArtistes>



# NETWORKING

## ANNUAL GATHERINGS

The Annual Gathering is the biggest event in the Beltane's calendar. Taking place each summer, it is a chance to share best practice, inspire new activities, and make plans for the year ahead.

The 2013 Annual Gathering took place at Summerhall, Edinburgh. This venue is a former university veterinary science building turned into a hub for the arts. Inspired by the new art exhibitions and old lab equipment, we built the Gathering around the theme of "Art Meets Science." Fifteen different public engagement projects were showcased at the walk-through bazaar that was visited by nearly 100 guests. Everyone was treated to ice-cream from Edinburgh's Chocolate Tree café and beer from Summerhall's on-site microbrewery.



**"It is a chance to share best practice, inspire new activities, and make plans for the year ahead."**



In 2014, the Gathering looked at participatory research, with a special focus on 'Citizen Research' – Citizen Science principles employed to all disciplines. Guests were welcomed to the Grassmarket Community Project for a barbecue, a masterclass with experts in participatory research, and a chance to meet Beltane Fellows past and present.



**Join us at our 2015 Annual Gathering! Watch our website [www.beltanenetwork.org](http://www.beltanenetwork.org) for more details early next year.**

## NETWORKING BREAKFASTS AND TWILIGHTS

Beltane Breakfasts and Twilights are informal events where members of the Beltane community share their experiences of aspects of public engagement with research. University researchers and support staff, plus people from organisations which wish to work with universities, have a chance to share tips over bacon rolls, coffee and cake.

Breakfasts and Twilights take place approximately monthly during university term-time and, to help maximise attendance, take place first thing in the morning or at end of the working day. To accommodate individuals with caring responsibilities, there is regular alternation between Breakfasts and Twilights.



## #INDYREF ENGAGEMENT

One benefit of becoming Research Fellow in the Social Studies of Finance at the University of Edinburgh in 2012 was to be plunged into the independence debates. True, these do involve politics as name-calling and selective reading of evidence, but they are also politics at its most meaningful: the question of how to live together. A Beltane event at the Scottish Parliament in March 2014 was an excellent forum in which to learn how to engage, as researchers, in these debates. A social scientist studying financial markets, I look to offer alternative perspectives on finance, a major campaign issue. For me, learning that the University supports its staff using their expertise and authority in the campaign was crucial: I can now throw myself into these critical debates with greater confidence, something that has already resulted in an interview with BBC Radio Scotland after I submitted evidence to a parliamentary enquiry.

**Philip Grant**  
Research Fellow in the Social Studies of Finance,  
Department of Sociology, The University of  
Edinburgh

## EDINBURGH'S SMALLER FESTIVALS

Early mornings are not the usual habitat for festival directors – especially not working to over capacity, often with another job. However, the promise of meeting other dedicated counterparts and a hearty breakfast meant we came in droves to be inspired by each other's passion.

The Beltane showed all the skills of a great host; each festival was welcomed, introduced to each other and the conversation kept flowing at a comfortable pace.

Community is often established by sharing food together. We found common ground as we shared our triumphs and challenges over a revitalising cup of coffee.

As the breakfast ended, we left with a renewed awareness of the importance of public engagement and how able and willing university students and departments are to share their skills and knowledge with smaller festivals to create fantastic events. Each of us had a least one new event to plan with an exciting new partner.

**Katherine Newbigging**  
Director of the Just Festival

## ADVERTISING LOCALLY

I have attended a number of the Beltane's Breakfast and Twilight sessions over the last two years and I have come away from all of them with a wealth of innovative new ideas as well as a considerable number of new contacts. I found the Beltane's "Advertising Locally" Twilight session particularly useful. As an outreach centre based within the University of Edinburgh, we are constantly trying to broaden our impact by accessing new audiences. The "Advertising Locally" session introduced me to some fantastic local, and free, avenues through which to promote our various events. As a direct result of attending the session, I now promote the majority of the Alwaleed Centre's events through *The List* (a local events magazine/website) as well as through Freegle (a local online free-ads network). The impact for us has been considerable with a significant number of new faces appearing at many of our events.

**Tom Lea**  
Outreach Projects Manager,  
Alwaleed Centre, The University of  
Edinburgh

Do you have an idea for an interesting networking topic? Email us at [info@beltanenetwork.org](mailto:info@beltanenetwork.org)



# MEET THE BELTANE FELLOWS

The Fellowship scheme has been a feature of the Beltane from its beginning in 2008. Rather than work with a large core team, the Beltane creates lots of 'outposts' in the form of Beltane Fellows. Fellows are members of academic staff who are relieved of their duties for one day a week for six months, during which time they can work on developing their engagement activities. In return for the Beltane's financial support and mentoring, Fellows are expected to act as long-term ambassadors for public engagement in their own institution.

We now have an active community of over thirty Fellows who we bring together regularly to share updates on their activities, contacts and advice. We will be appointing more Fellows in the year to come. The success of the Fellowship scheme was recognised in 2012 when it was highly commended in the "Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers" category at the Times Higher Education Awards.



Tim Johnson

## Tim Johnson

The Beltane Fellowship had a fairly profound effect on my research. I became much more aware of the context of my field, Financial Mathematics, in society. The main research impact of the Fellowship was a thesis that at the heart of contemporary Financial Mathematics is the moral concept, Justice. This work was recognised in 2011 as being one of One Hundred Big Ideas for the Future by RCUK, and since then I have developed the thesis by collaborating with social and human scientists. Alongside my mathematical research this work has matured and in 2013 I was invited to speak about it at a couple of international conferences while this year I am an invited speaker at a major UK conference "Circling the Square: Research, politics, media and impact". My mathematical research is shifting from applying stochastic analysis to finance to employing complex network theory to problems of financial stability, a significant change.

Despite these successes, my career path has not been straightforward. My public engagement activity had an impact on my research direction, this has slowed my publication rate and advancing in an academic career stills relies heavily on publications while, at present, public engagement seems to carry less weight. However, I am optimistic that projects like the Beltane Network are helping to gradually shift this balance.

**Tim Johnson**  
Academic Fellow, School of Mathematical & Computer Sciences, Heriot-Watt University

## Antonella Sorace

I established Bilingualism Matters in September 2008 as a local, research-based information service for parents and teachers which focused on the facts and benefits of early bilingualism. I was awarded a Beltane Fellowship from September 2009 to March 2010, which was a critical time for putting this project on a more solid footing in terms of partnerships, links, and funding applications.

The Beltane Fellowship allowed me time to develop the project and provided me with access to expertise, contacts, and opportunities to exchange ideas with other researchers interested in public engagement. Now Bilingualism Matters has become a fully supported Centre at the University of Edinburgh, with office premises and permanent staff; it will have a network of fifteen branches in the UK and Europe by the end of 2014; it has numerous partnerships and outreach projects in the public sector, where it collaborates with a wide range of partners including policy makers, education authorities and health professionals; it also has an increasing presence in the private sector. Moreover, Bilingualism Matters provides many students and visiting researchers with training and volunteering opportunities, which directly support academic skills in teaching and research and are valued by potential employers. The Beltane Fellowship contributed in a significant way to this success story.

## Antonella Sorace

Professor of Developmental Linguistics,  
The University of Edinburgh and Director, Bilingualism Matters



Antonella Sorace



Oliver Escobar

## Oliver Escobar

When I started my Beltane Fellowship in 2009, I could not imagine the difference it would make to my academic career. It provided me with space for personal development which allowed me to put into practice my belief in the role that universities can play as forums and catalysers for informed public dialogue and democratic participation. It affected the way I approach teaching, giving me the confidence and tools to make my lectures highly participative – something that my students have appreciated by nominating me for a teaching award. The Fellowship provided key contacts to develop a range of networks across Scotland and beyond. Now I often work with government, communities and third sector on a range of processes and policy issues. Finally, all these dimensions have reshaped how I think about, and do, research, and opened numerous opportunities to take on exciting projects like the first Citizens' Juries about wind farms in Scotland. This has led to publications in various formats, reaching a wide range of publics, for instance, my Beltane book "Public Dialogue and Deliberation" has been reprinted and widely distributed online.

The Fellowship also helped me to get my post at the University of Edinburgh Public Policy Network in 2010 and then as a Fellow of the Academy of Government. All in all, over the last five years I have co-organised and facilitated over 40 public engagement processes and events, and developed various networks such as the Citizen Participation Network, which includes 500 citizens, researchers, policy makers and practitioners; and the Dialogue Facilitation Network, with over 150 facilitators trained through our Beltane courses. The Fellowship has provided an excellent platform to develop my work and seek impact – which, to me, means trying to make a difference in a range of social and policy worlds.

**Oliver Escobar**  
Fellow of the Academy of Government,  
The University of Edinburgh

During his Beltane Fellowship, Oliver was a researcher at Queen Margaret University.

## TIMELINE OF OUR FELLOWS

If you want to know more about the Beltane dialogue courses, Oliver Escobar, Wendy Faulkner and Heather Rea share the story in the latest issue of the *Journal of Dialogue Studies*: <http://www.dialoguesociety.org/publications/academia/944-journal-of-dialogue-studies-vol-2-no-1.html>



**Timothy Johnson**  
Heriot-Watt University

September 2009



**Antonella Sorace**  
The University of Edinburgh

September 2009



**Anne Claveirole**  
Edinburgh Napier University

September 2009



**Oliver Escobar**  
Queen Margaret University

September 2009



**Marieke Hoeve**  
The University of Edinburgh

November 2009



**Sue Milne**  
The University of Edinburgh

January 2010



**Bernadette O'Rourke**  
Heriot-Watt University

September 2010



## Mar Carmena

I have not met a lot of research scientists who think that public engagement is a bad idea. Although my experience is that many of us may not have it as number one priority, and on occasions scientists resent the time that outreach takes away from other research activities. It is something they prefer 'others' to take care of.

I cannot pinpoint the exact moment when I started taking an interest in public engagement, it was certainly a long time ago. I can remember the time when my son wrote in his homework jotter that he did not like stereotypes because his friends thought I was a mad scientist (illustrated by a picture of a lady in a white coat with mad hair). I can also remember when my colleague's son told his teacher that his parents owned the 'chippy' in the High Street (he did not want to admit they were scientists!).

I started developing some ideas for outreach activities for children very early in my career. I was particularly interested in promoting girls' involvement in science and engineering. However, it was only when I was awarded a Beltane Public Engagement Fellowship that I had the opportunity to kick-start some of my bigger projects and set the basis for many others. The Fellowship was essential for this because it allowed me to ring-fence some of my time and dedicate it exclusively to develop my outreach ideas. Being a Beltane Fellow also meant having access to training courses that have been fundamental for my projects. Most importantly, the Fellowship allowed me to meet many members of the Beltane Network 'extended family', so I could establish collaborations with people as passionate about public engagement as myself.

The Beltane Fellowship was a turning point in my career. Public engagement has become an important part of my life. I am continually developing new ideas and I actively encourage my colleagues to volunteer their time to put them in practice and become more involved.

**Mar Carmena**  
Senior Research Fellow, School of Biological Sciences,  
The University of Edinburgh



Mar Carmena



## Dan Ridley-Ellis

Since my Fellowship, I've become the Head of the Centre for Wood Science and Technology – something that happened despite me regularly making jokes about my work at Bright Club. Most of our research is about understanding the growth and utilisation of timber grown in the United Kingdom and Ireland, including how this may be affected by the ways trees are managed, and by the environment. Our aim is to increase the value of our forests and reduce the amount of wood and energy wasted.

Doing public engagement helped me in a number of ways, and continues to do so. I work in the convoluted area of timber grading and being able to explain things to people who have better things to do than read European Standards is certainly useful – but perhaps the most beneficial thing for me has been learning how to organise things, delegate, and get things done on a tight timescale. Now that I've organised a Fringe show with nearly ninety performers, having twenty tonnes of timber turn up unexpectedly early seems like a walk in the park.

**Dan Ridley-Ellis**  
Principal Research Fellow,  
Centre for Wood Science and Technology,  
Edinburgh Napier University



**Kathy Charles**  
Edinburgh Napier University



**Jenny Rodgers (Bos)**  
The University of Edinburgh



**Mar Carmena**  
The University of Edinburgh



**Kathleen McDougall**  
The University of the Highlands and Islands



**Stephano Padilla**  
Heriot-Watt University



**Dan Ridley-Ellis**  
Edinburgh Napier University



**Mark Wright**  
The University of Edinburgh



**Liz Such**  
The University of Edinburgh



**Nanette Mutrie**  
The University of Edinburgh



**Jenny Roe**  
Heriot-Watt University



**Yolanda Fernández-Diez**  
Heriot-Watt University



**Karen Halliday**  
The University of Edinburgh

September 2010

January 2011

January 2011

January 2011

January 2011

April 2011

April 2011

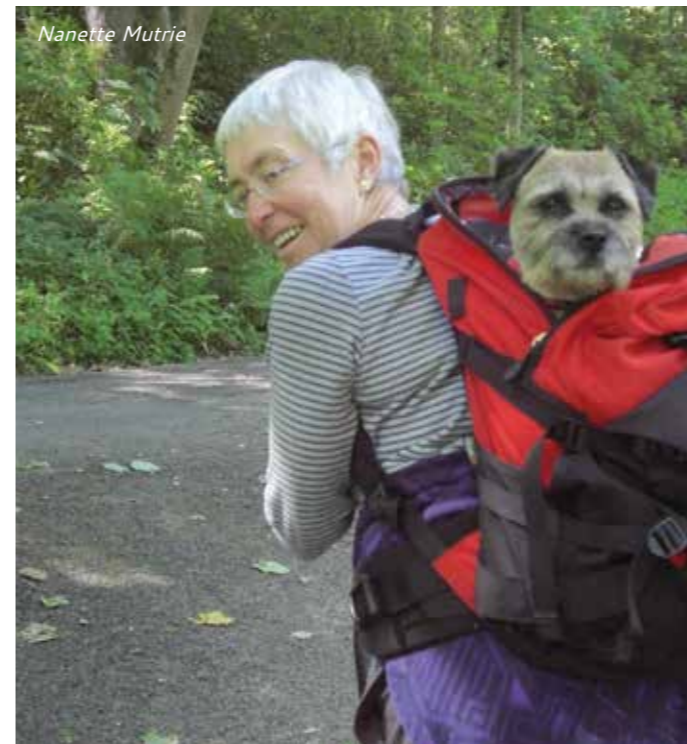
December 2012

December 2012

April 2013

June 2013

June 2013



## Nanette Mutrie

Reflecting on this, I know that the Beltane Parliament Fellowship gave me connections to new parts of the University of Edinburgh and the concept of 'Beltane'! It was also a bonus that this was a joint Fellowship and allowed the pair of us to learn from each other and to firm up some future research ideas which we are now pursuing.

Our engagement was really a mini project in which we interacted with as many people who worked in the Parliament building as possible and invited them to consider how they might 'sit less and walk more' while at work.

We presented the findings of this mini project to a packed house in one of the wonderful committee rooms of the Parliament building. We were fortunate to get three world-class speakers to provide input on that occasion as well. This enhanced our public profile as a new and vibrant research centre at the University of Edinburgh (the Physical Activity for Health Research Centre).

In short, the Parliament Fellowship opened new doors, established new networks and gave us time to explore ideas that will be hatched soon in funded research. Thank you to the Beltane!

**Nanette Mutrie**  
Beltane Parliament Fellow and Chair in Physical Activity for Health,  
School of Education, The University of Edinburgh

*Nanette worked with Liz Such, Beltane Parliament Fellow and Lecturer in Leisure and Sport Policy in the School.*



Yolanda Fernández-Diez

## Yolanda Fernández-Diez

My Beltane Fellowship has been an injection of life. All the training received and the opportunity to interact with new working environments and publics have been crucial to discovering myself and others. Now, I perceive things differently and my thinking and understanding have reached higher levels. The Fellowship has also helped me to value public views, and thus to have a bigger picture of my research and how to create impact.

During the development of my Beltane public engagement project, I have observed the academic system from a different angle. I would describe universities as brains with the ability to improve living conditions in our society. However, I feel that the full potential of universities still needs to be unlocked. Because of this, I strongly believe that public engagement is one of the best things that ever happened to academia, researchers and me.

**Yolanda Fernández-Diez**  
Research Associate,  
Centre for Innovation in Carbon Capture and Storage,  
Heriot-Watt University



“The Beltane embodies much of what I see as the fundamental point of a university – stimulating 360° interaction that centres upon knowledge and its transformation into wisdom.”



Graham Turner

### Graham Turner

The Beltane embodies much of what I see as the fundamental point of a university – stimulating 360° interaction that centres upon knowledge and its transformation into wisdom. Learning is all about joining the dots, to my mind, and the Beltane is a wonderfully invigorating machine for doing just that. My research focuses on British Sign Language (BSL), and right now, we are building up to launching a BSL Bill in the Scottish Parliament – so my Fellowship has been associated with promoting public dialogue around this often hidden language. Being a Beltane Fellow has helped me to understand ‘what works’ when it comes to facilitating informed decision-making in the public sphere, and helped me to refine the way I work with and for an often unheard community. The balance between undertaking ‘objective’ research and carrying an ‘expert’ opinion into application through policy development is very fine and complex, and the Beltane has opened many doors to me in enabling me to walk that line effectively.

**Graham Turner**  
*Director of Research and Chair of Translation,  
 School of Management & Languages,  
 Heriot-Watt University*

### Jen Ross

You can find more about Jen’s story on page 28.



**Sue Fletcher-Watson**  
 The University of Edinburgh

June 2013



**Jen Ross**  
 The University of Edinburgh

September 2013



**Eugenia Rodrigues**  
 The University of Edinburgh

January 2014



**Felicity Mehendale**  
 The University of Edinburgh

January 2014



**Graham Turner**  
 Heriot-Watt University

January 2014



**Jackie Gulland**  
 The University of Edinburgh

January 2014

### Stephen Lawrie

I applied for a Beltane Fellowship because I have a long-standing interest in trying to reduce the stigma that surrounds and exacerbates mental illness and I thought that the Fellowship would get me doing more and doing it better. I have certainly done more this year than ever before, partly because of the opportunities that the Beltane (especially Sarah and Heather) provide, but also because of the encouragement from others in the organisation.

I also now prioritise public engagement more or less equally with clinical work, research and the dreaded administration duties I have. I have already done a couple of things I simply would not have dreamed of before: a University of Edinburgh TEDx talk early in the year (which was terrifying and rewarding in equal measure), and I am currently planning an Edinburgh Festival Fringe show at the “Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas” called “Antidepressants Are NOT Overprescribed”. Moreover, the gently insistent advice I seem to get from Sarah and Heather to start blogging and tweeting looks like it may pay off by the end of the year.

**Stephen Lawrie**  
*Head of the Division of Psychiatry,  
 Professor of Psychiatry & Neuro-Imaging and Director  
 of PsySTAR, The University of Edinburgh*



Stephen Lawrie



**Jean Carletta**  
 The University of Edinburgh

January 2014



**Joel Chaney**  
 Heriot-Watt University

January 2014



**Stephen Lawrie**  
 The University of Edinburgh

January 2014



**Nancy Lombard**  
 Glasgow Caledonian University

January 2014



**Alan Walker**  
 Honorary PE Fellow  
 University Edinburgh

January 2014



**Wendy Faulkner**  
 Honorary PE Fellow  
 University Edinburgh

January 2014



Nancy Lombard

### Nancy Lombard

Having worked in the third sector prior to academia, I have always been fairly confident about talking to different audiences about the work that I do.

Taking part in the Beltane, however, I realised that I needed to reflect upon the people I choose to talk to and also think about how I engaged with different audiences. For example, charities working with women and children escaping from violent men are always keen to listen to my research as it can be used as evidence for their funding applications. However, schools, local authorities, government agencies may be less keen to engage with my research. They may feel it is not their priority or it is someone else’s issue. These are the groups that I need to talk to and, more importantly, these are the groups that I need to encourage to engage with, and listen to, my research.

Taking part in the “Impact and Influence” coaching made me think about how I engage with different audiences, about the passionate, angry voice I use which may not always be appropriate. The training session challenged me to think on my feet, it showed me how to address an audience in different ways and also illuminated non-verbal forms of communication.

Even if you think you are already engaging with the public, I would recommend the Beltane and their training programmes as they offer a plethora of ideas and opportunities to slowly coax you out of your public engagement comfort zone and try things you never thought you might. I’m just glad no one has invented public engagement skydiving yet...

**Nancy Lombard**  
*Reader in Sociology and Social Policy,  
 Glasgow Caledonian University*



# BELTANE

## Civic Connections

- Edinburgh Active Citizen Group
- Public Policy Network
- The Scottish Parliament
- Scotland's Futures Forum
- Realising the Potential of Scottish Universities Dinners
- Scottish Parliament Information Service (SPICe)

## Edinburgh Community

- Impact Arts
- Ragged University
- Mindroom
- ASCUS (Art Science Collaborative)
- The Grassmarket Community Project
- Annual Gathering 2014

## Visitor Attractions

- National Museums Scotland
- Our Dynamic Earth
- Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh
- Summerhall
- The Scottish Storytelling Centre
- The Royal Observatory Edinburgh Visitor Centre

## Platforms to engage

- Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas
- TEDx University of Edinburgh
- Bright Club Edinburgh
- PhD in an Hour
- EU Researchers' Night (26 Sept 2014, 25 Sept 2015)
- Famelab
- Tales from the Tweed

## Comedy

- The Stand Comedy Club
- BBC Comedy @ the Fringe
- Bright Club Scotland

## UK Public Engagement

- The Times Cheltenham Science Festival
- The Wellcome Trust
- Erinma Ochu Fellow
- Chloe Sheppard, Researchers engagement
- The British Science Association
- SFC (Scottish Funding Council)
- Universities Scotland
- Research Councils UK (RCUK)
- The Royal Society of Edinburgh

## Festivals

- Edinburgh International Science Festival
- Just Festival
- Previously... Scotland's History Festival
- Susan Morrison
- Midlothian Science Festival

## Universities

### Members

#### The University of Edinburgh

- CHSS
  - Fellows
    - Wendy Faulkner
    - Mark Wright
    - Sue Milne
    - Sue Fletcher-Watson
    - Liz Such
    - Nanette Mutrie
    - Eugénia Rodrigues
    - Jackie Gulland
    - Jen Ross
    - Antonella Sorace
  - Knowledge Exchange Office – Anne Sofie Laeگران
- CMVM
  - Fellows
    - Stephen Lawrie
    - Marieke Hoeve
    - Felicity Mehendale

#### Heriot-Watt University

- Fellows
  - Graham Turner
  - Yolanda Fernández-Diez
  - Jenny Roe
  - Joel Chaney
  - Tim Johnson
  - Stephano Padilla
  - Bernadette O'Rourke

#### Edinburgh Napier University

- Fellows
  - Dan Ridley-Ellis
  - Kathy Charles
  - Anne Claveirole

#### Queen Margaret University

- Fellow
  - Oliver Escobar

### International

#### Science Centre Netzwerk – Vienna, Austria

#### University of Alberta, Canada

- Faculty of Extension

#### Memorial University, Canada

#### Rhine Waal University of Applied Sciences, Germany

#### Lyon University, Service Science et Société, France

### Collaborators

#### The University of Aberdeen

#### The University of Glasgow

#### Strathclyde University

#### Glasgow Caledonian University

- Fellow
  - Nancy Lombard
- GCU Engagement

#### The University of the Highlands and Islands

- Fellow
  - Kathleen McDougall

### Beacons for Public Engagement links

- The National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement
  - The Catalysts
  - Engage Conference
- The University of Manchester – Social Responsibility Unit
- UCL – Public Engagement Unit
- The University of Norwich – Engagement and Enterprise
- The University of Cardiff – Community Engagement
- Newcastle University

**DISCLAIMER** – This is by no means a comprehensive representation of all the people in our network, but it is here to give you a flavour of the breadth of the network. If you want to find out more, email us on [info@beltanenetwork.org](mailto:info@beltanenetwork.org) to fix a time for a discussion over coffee.





## THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

### The Colleges of Science and Engineering and Medicine and Veterinary Medicine – Excellence with Impact

The University of Edinburgh is a participant in the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council's (BBSRC) Excellence with Impact competition, which "aims to recognise institutions that develop and deliver a vision for maximising impact". The winning organisation will receive an award of £0.5M.

The main contributors to the University of Edinburgh's submission are representatives of the Roslin Institute and the School of Biological Sciences. Both these groups receive significant funding from the BBSRC so they have joined forces to show how the University is committed to maximising the impact of their research.

The impact of scientific research can take many forms, from industry interaction and the related economic impacts of spin-out company creation, patents and licensing, to training, knowledge exchange, policy development and, of course, public engagement.

A committee chaired by Malcolm Walkinshaw, School of Biological Sciences, meets to discuss the University's submission to the competition.

*"As part of the Beacons project, the University of Edinburgh was lucky enough to have access to the excellent resources provided by the Beltane team. Moving forward, we are committed to developing a culture wherein our researchers have the drive and skills to deliver impacts of their research through engagement with the public and other key stakeholders."*

**Malcolm Walkinshaw**  
*Chair of Structural Biochemistry, School of Biological Sciences, The University of Edinburgh*

Heather Rea from the Beltane is a key member of the Excellence with Impact Competition Committee. The Committee has been keen to acknowledge the Beltane's role in developing an increased understanding of the impact and benefits of public engagement. Heather will have a significant role to play in the University's submission to the competition.

For more about the BBSRC Excellence with Impact Competition, please visit: <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/business/fostering-innovation/excellence-impact.aspx>

**Patricia Hart**  
*Head of Communications and Science Administration, Roslin Institute, The University of Edinburgh*



"Tai Chi & Chai Tea" at the Gather Festival, March 2014

### Student Community Engagement

Student community engagement forms one of twelve strands of the Student Experience Project at the University of Edinburgh. The aim of this new area is to explore, through appropriate development work and audit of existing initiatives, the potential requirements for the University to develop community engagement as a key strand of student activity.

Over 1500 students volunteered in the local community through the Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) in 2013/14 and over 400 completed the Edinburgh Award. The Edinburgh Award encourages students to consider employability aspects through various activities, receiving formal recognition via their personal Higher Education Achievement Report.

Looking forward, we are now considering how community engagement can be placed at the heart of both curricular and co-curricular activity as part of the University's learning and teaching strategy. Following the success of a final year course in the School of Geosciences, in which students have worked with schools, ecological projects and other stakeholders in Scottish communities over the past eight years, a portfolio of interdisciplinary, credit-bearing outreach courses is being developed. The use of digital resources to bring together students and the community is also being considered. It is hoped that the example set in public engagement by the Beltane can be followed within a community engagement context. I look forward to exploring this with the Beltane team.

**Dawn Smith**  
*Community Engagement Developer  
The University of Edinburgh*



### The College of Humanities and Social Science

If we were ever in doubt, the ninety-seven impact case studies submitted to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) from the College of Humanities and Social Science (CHSS) at the University of Edinburgh showed that our research makes a difference. This is how Pete Lamont, Knowledge Exchange Director for the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences, chose to open an event celebrating our achievements in April 2014:

*"Research in our College has influenced every area of life, from architecture to archaeology, from religion to science, in education and health, art and literature, business and economics, politics and law. We've reached beyond the academy to improve the quality of life of the over-sixties and the quality of education of under 18s; to challenge stereotypes about Islam and Muslims, and to shape the policy of the Church of Scotland; to have a direct effect on regulation of surveillance in society, and on both sides of the debate about Scottish independence; to provide advice on how to deal with the international financial crisis, and on how to improve our response to climate change. In other words, we are making an impact on the lives of young and old, rich and poor, of different faiths and political opinions, in Scotland, the UK and throughout the world."*

The REF submissions showed that impact was the result of a longstanding commitment to public engagement. The sociology submission quoted Tom Burns, the founder of their department in 1965: "It is the business of sociologists to conduct a critical debate with the public about its equipment of social institutions". English Literature could draw their public engagement all the way back to the first Regius Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Letters in 1762. Now impact beyond the academy is not only part of universities' mission, but a key criterion of how the quality of research is assessed. How does public engagement feature in this?

The REF exercise showed that demonstrating benefit was easier in cases where events were held in partnership with other organisations. In some cases, we could draw on their evaluation data and ticket sales; in others, partners reported that the collaboration had impact on the way they, as an organisation, engaged with the public or other aspects of their practice. Similarly, public events were sometimes vehicles to get into the media and contribute to public debate, and to develop relationships with influencers and decision makers who were in position to make changes in their practice based on research.

To be able to demonstrate impact from public engagement, with humanities and social science as well as other research, we therefore have to look beyond the events: events are key steps in the pathways to impact, but the preparation before, the follow up between and after are as important both to develop good quality engagement and sustainable relationships to help research make a difference.

**Anne Sofie Laegran**  
*Knowledge Exchange Manager,  
College of Humanities and Social Science,  
The University of Edinburgh*



## Queen Margaret University EDINBURGH

### An Engaged University

Queen Margaret University (QMU) is committed to being an engaged university. Public engagement is a crucial strand of the University's commitment to sustainability as it enhances research and promotes a positive contribution to society, resulting in greater relevance, accountability and transparency. The value of our interdisciplinary work is measured by its impact and the social usefulness, practicality and applicability of its outcomes. Our research projects and initiatives contribute to social, economic and cultural issues within local and international settings, and the public and private sectors.

We are focused on conducting applied and translational research that can have an impact on real-life issues affecting the health status, and quality of life of people, the professional practice of our external communities and the development of healthcare policy and public dialogue and governance. Stakeholder engagement and collaboration also influences our research-dependent knowledge exchange activities which are aimed at generating socially, economically and clinically useful impacts. For example, we aim to facilitate improved quality of health outcomes (often manifesting as symptom relief, for example, the amelioration of fatigue) and/or experience of healthcare (for example, specifying nutritional requirements for foods and fluids provided in Scottish hospitals), as well as increased understanding of our research methods, findings and their implications among practitioners and professional bodies. Our work on psychosocial well-being has targeted impact on policymakers (multilateral and bilateral agencies), service delivery organisations (international humanitarian organisations, public and voluntary sector providers of services to asylum seekers and refugees) and has also directly addressed the improvement of communications between these two.

*"Working with the Beltane has supported QMU in creating a culture where impact from research engagement can grow and flourish. Public engagement has always been core to QMU's mission – putting people at the centre of everything we value."*

**Alan Gilloran**  
*Deputy Principal,  
Queen Margaret University*

**Kim Gilchrist**  
*Head, Research and Knowledge  
Exchange Development,  
Queen Margaret University*





## Off to London We Go...

The public engagement expertise of Heriot-Watt researchers was recognized nationally in 2014, with engaged researchers from the University being among a select group competitively chosen to showcase their research at the prestigious 2014 Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition. Peter Woodward, Director of the Institute for Infrastructure and Environment, introduced "The Science of Speed", an interactive exhibit on ultra-high-speed trains. His team were joined at the Royal Society by Jonathan Leach (Lecturer) from the Institute of Photonics and Quantum Sciences, and his colleagues from the University of Glasgow. Their exhibition titled "Creative Cameras" explored cutting edge physics research with the general public, demonstrating their developments in creating a camera that can see round corners. Of the Royal Society Exhibition, Public Engagement Coordinator Katarzyna Przybycien says:

"We are proud that Heriot-Watt can show off its most spectacular research at such high profile events, but our main aim is to embed public engagement into every level of academic life, thus continuing to bring all sorts of benefits to the communities we serve."

### Laura Wicks

Public Engagement Coordinator and Research Associate in the School of Life Sciences, Heriot-Watt University



*Creative Cameras exhibit at the Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition, 2014*



*Speed of Science exhibit at the Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition, 2014*



*Heriot-Watt's Principal's Public Engagement Prize*

## Rewarding Engagement

An annual highlight for Heriot-Watt Engage is the Principal's Public Engagement Prize, an initiative which supports the excellent and creative public engaging work undertaken by Heriot-Watt staff, researchers and students. The range of entries received annually demonstrate the wide range of public engagement activities inspired by Heriot-Watt research. Examples included sea creature touch tanks to inspire children to protect their environment, exhibits showcasing the benefits of using sustainable materials, and roadshows preparing society for natural disasters.

Digital engagement was a popular endeavour, with some researchers experimenting and using Facebook, blogs and Twitter to introduce their research to a wider audience. HW Engage is coalescing these different efforts to build a digitally engaged network at Heriot-Watt, providing digital engagement training and support. The enthusiasm for digital engagement was showcased in a Beltane blogging breakfast hosted at the University, with a large audience gathered to share the successes and pitfalls one can run into with blogging.

## Heriot-Watt Engage

Across the grassy campus of Heriot-Watt University, there are many individual champions of public engagement, building relationships with the public and feeling rewarded for doing so. From the parliament buildings in Holyrood to the stages of the Edinburgh Fringe, academics from all departments have been getting involved with activities where they can share the passion for their research with those keen to learn more. To support these champions, and the many others who wanted to get involved, Heriot Watt Engage (HW Engage, <http://www.hw.ac.uk/research/public-engagement.htm>) was set up as part of the Beltane Network in 2013. Our aim is to "Support, Stimulate and Promote" engagement activities across the University, building networks of engaged researchers and developing their public engagement skills and impact. Along with the Beltane Network, Heriot-Watt Deputy Principal for Research and Knowledge Transfer, Alan Miller led the creation of HW Engage. Alan has been pleased with the organisation's success:

"It is increasingly important to explain our research by our lecturers and professors to the public in understandable ways, particularly when it is publicly funded; HW Engage has been very successful in stimulating and supporting this process since its creation."

Alan chairs HW Engage's Advisory Group, which is formed of experienced individuals from across all departments of the University. The group provides advice and strategic oversight on engagement activities and opportunities, working together to embed public engagement into academic life at Heriot-Watt.

Despite HW Engage being a recent endeavour, we are already seeing enhanced creativity and boldness by academics in their practices of engaging the public, using humour, aesthetics, positive emotions and their everyday experiences to build relationships. Public Engagement Coordinator Laura Wicks says:

"This outward looking perspective has paid dividends, with academics increasingly successful in attracting external funds for public engagement, as well as developing their skills and experiences."



## More Than Meets the Eye

Recently, I welcomed a visitor to our Sighthill Campus to discuss common areas of interest, and in the hour that we talked, I gave a whistle-stop overview of the many areas of research in the School of Life, Sport and Social Sciences at Edinburgh Napier University. My guest was rather surprised at the breadth of research going on and told me something that I've heard many times before: "I had no idea that you did all of that!" This often-repeated phrase is of course a sign that we, as a University, seem to be not so good at engaging with others to share what we do.

In spite of our less-than-perfect communication, there are numerous pockets of excellent engagement happening throughout the University all of the time. For example, Kathy Charles has just finished her series of public lectures examining different aspects of forensic psychology, including criminal profiling and narcissism as well as others. Over the last few months, Kathy, a former Beltane Fellow, has organised and delivered the series of four "Strange Psychologies" lectures at the Lighthouse in Glasgow; this has enabled her to share some of her research and interests in the field with sell-out audiences. Earlier, in March, the Scottish Centre for the Book, whose aim is to enhance and promote the study of print culture in all its forms, hosted an event for young people in the Glassroom at our Merchiston Campus. This event, themed "Aliens in Edinburgh", celebrated the winners of the sixth World Book Day Primary Schools Art Competition, which this year engaged 3,500 children from thirty-six schools. This event was sponsored by Edinburgh Airport and the Scottish Centre for the Book (<http://www.napier.ac.uk/creativeindustries/centres/scob/Pages/Home.aspx>), and organised by students on our MSc Publishing course. It exemplifies another great example of engagement that benefits a number of different groups, including the participants.

In fact, a number of events and activities take place within and beyond the schools and faculties throughout the year. Clearly, there is much for the University to be proud of and to shout about. To this end, and to help us maximise the impact of the engagement going on, we recently convened a working group to develop a public engagement strategy for the University. This strategy will support those engaging, or wishing to engage in, public engagement activities. The group, comprising a range of individuals from across the University, and including representation from the Beltane, reviewed practices including a survey of staff experiences and attitudes towards engagement, and the group has now made its recommendations. I'm pleased to say that all of the recommendations were well received by Head of Research Strategy, Alison McCleery, and Vice Principal (Academic), Alistair Sambell, who have now taken these forward to the University's Leadership Team. In the immediate future, the working group will continue to support public engagement as a steering group, with advice from the Beltane, and will help to develop a visible presence for real and virtual visitors to the University. We're all very excited about these developments, so do watch this space!

### Clare Taylor

Convenor of the Public Engagement Working Group and Lecturer, Edinburgh Napier University



## Looking Ahead

Sharing our work with the wider community, listening and collaborating and learning from those experiences for the benefit of all parties, is at the heart of our mission as a university.

"We are now in the process of appointing a full-time Public Engagement Officer to help build on the wide range of activity that has been happening for many years across our campuses. We also have a PE strategy in place, which the Beltane helped guide and shape, and which should see a number of events take place in late autumn to encourage even more staff to become involved with public engagement activities."

### Alistair Sambell

Vice-Principal (Academic),  
Edinburgh Napier University



# PLATFORMS TO ENGAGE



I thoroughly enjoyed putting on a show as part of the 2013 "Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas". The whole idea of making a 'show' for a paying audience out of academic research was a daunting one, but really useful in terms of helping me think about how I might communicate my research to a non-academic audience in ways they would find interesting and engaging. It also, actually, made me think about what the whole role and function of academic research is in the first place. I think public engagement work like this is a really important part of academic life: working in public institutions, it's my view that we have a duty to share our research with public audiences as they, ultimately, in various ways, make our research possible in the first place.

I was surprised by how many people were willing to pay to hear an academic talk about their research and it made me think how often they are excluded from that research by the way in which we tend to typically organise publication and dissemination of our findings. Moreover, given this was the first time something like this had been undertaken as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, I had anticipated that there was a good chance that I would just be basically giving a 50 minute public lecture. However, what surprised me most was the level of sheer interest, debate and engagement that went on in the audience: both between me and the audience, but also between audience members. Given my own research, which is tied to thinking about issues of crime and harm with a view to, ultimately, developing social policies that better address the harms people experience in their daily lives beyond criminal law, what the whole experience shed light on for me most was the need for public support for both the articulation and development of such policies. In this way, the process



Lynne Copson

was really illuminating in terms of thinking about how we can, might, and should, foster further public engagement and debate around these kinds of issues if we want to affect social change.

The experience as part of the "Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas" therefore became really important in how I have thought about and sought to develop my own research. It became a central part of the narrative of a postdoctoral funding application I subsequently developed which sought to build on this activity and develop it into a research methodology to try to find out more about public perceptions and ideas around harm and crime, and also the types of policies that might be possible of being enacted (namely, which of those would find support among the public and why). While the funding bid was ultimately unsuccessful, the idea behind it remains a core feature of my future research plans and, having recently moved to a more research-focussed role, I am looking to using my participation in the 2014 "Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas" to refine these further, ideally using it as a pilot for the methodology I hope to develop further in future.

Above all, I found participating in last year's "Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas" to be a really exhilarating experience and, as a result, I am even more passionate about the need for genuine publicly engaged academic research.

**Lynne Copson**  
Early Career Development Fellow,  
School of Law, The University  
of Edinburgh

To get inspiration for your own Cabaret see what dangerous ideas were shared in 2014:  
<http://codi2014.beltanenetwork.org/>



April 2014's Bright Club Edinburgh show saw the 100th performer take to the stage. Bridget Hanna, who works at Edinburgh Napier University, joined the ranks of researchers, students, academics and other specialists who have bravely taken to the stage to do stand-up comedy about their work. Most Bright Clubbers have no prior experience of doing comedy, but Bridget, who works in professional development and lectures psychology has previously written and delivered a level 4 Module on the psychology of humour at Glasgow Caledonian University so she came to the training already armed with educationally balanced laughter objectives.

On the same day as the April show, the original Bright Club, run by UCL, celebrated its fifth year and in July it will have been three years since the Bright Club idea came to Edinburgh – thanks to encouragement by the Beltane Network. So far, Edinburgh has had 187 Bright Clubber performances to a combined audience approaching 3,500. This is not counting the out-of-town specials or last year's huge Edinburgh Fringe show, which had 90 performers from all over the UK and an audience of over 1,000. Bright Club will return to the Fringe this year with a (relatively modest) run in three different venues.

About two thirds of our Bright Club Edinburgh performers work in science, maths, engineering or medicine – but all subjects are covered and more volunteers are sought from the arts and humanities. Also, despite the notoriously gendered world of stand-up comedy, the gender balance hasn't been too bad: 57% male, 43% female.

**Dan Ridley-Ellis**  
Principal Research Associate and Beltane Fellow,  
Edinburgh Napier University

Want to be funnier or at least laugh more? Find out when the next Bright Club Edinburgh Shows are:  
<http://brightclubedinburgh.blogspot.co.uk/>



Nicola Osborne



Pete Gwynne



Stacey Webb



Jen Wood





# TALES FROM THE TWEED

Ross Winter and I (plus our new baby!) walked the River Tweed in September 2013. We ran story-sharing events in communities along the way. At each event we, along with professional storytellers, academics and other experts, and local communities, shared stories related to the Tweed. These included folktales, ecology, history, and also personal reminiscences.

The Beltane helped us to recruit academics and other experts to tell their stories. All of those who took part would recommend getting involved in something similar to a colleague, and the informal tone made the project an exciting but safe place for researchers to engage:

"I'd not spoken to the public about my subject before – so it was a great, informal place to begin." ("Tales from the Tweed" contributor)

The project was challenging, but it changed the practice of those involved in a positive way. Our storytellers, professional and otherwise, now feel more confident and more aware of the audience's perspective. Our approach is now being adopted by others.

**Sophia Collins**  
Freelance science communicator

Read more about "Tales from the Tweed" at <http://talesfromthetweed.org>.



Sophia Collins, Ross Winter and their son Taliesin

# PHD IN AN HOUR

After two "PhD in an Hour" presentations, I can emphatically say this is a visionary initiative which creates synergy between researchers and the Edinburgh public. I found the event a heady mix of challenge and fulfilment. The hour was an opportunity to communicate my research on new independent Indian cinema to the public, using inclusive and accessible language. It was rewarding to receive feedback from the audience and immerse myself in the buzz of questions and discussions that followed my presentations. The diversity of "PhD in an Hour" topics (from science to cinema), and the series' growing popularity with the public, demonstrates its trailblazing possibilities. Watch this space!

**Ashvin Devasundaram**  
PhD student, School of Management and Languages,  
Heriot-Watt University

Fancy talking about your PhD for an hour or learning about someone else's? Find out more:  
<http://www.beltanetwork.org/opportunities/phd-in-an-hour>



# previously... Scotland's History Festival

A pioneering initiative at the 2013 *Previously...* Scotland's History Festival brought together the School of History, Classics and Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh, the National Archives of Scotland and the city charity Impact Arts to create a unique dramatic invocation of a 128 year-old murder, trial and execution.

In the autumn of 2013, we were lucky enough to be selected as interns on this project, tasked with performing archival research to unearth historical stories of young people processed by Edinburgh's criminal justice system. This story would then be turned into a theatrical performance piece by Impact Arts and performed at the 2013 Scotland's History Festival.



While both of us are skilled researchers, having copious experience working on our PhD theses in history, this project gave us the opportunity to step outside the academic environment and engage with history in new, unique ways. It was the first time either of us had been involved in such a collaboration, and in order for the project to be successful, we had to harness our academic skills and produce something digestible and succinct, but also factually correct and historically accurate, from which the young people of Impact Arts could work.

Read more about Scotland's History Festival at <http://www.historyfest.co.uk/>.

The case that was chosen was that of Francis Cockburn, a seventeen-year-old nailer who was executed in the early nineteenth century after a drunken brawl ending in a man's death. Impact Arts' young people took the story and made it their own, creating personalities for the characters and making their own judgements and assessments of the historical event, eventually turning the story into a series of theatrical installations.

The performance took place at Adam House on Saturday 23rd November 2013. Impact Arts' installations engaged directly with the audience and encouraged their full submersion in Cockburn's tale, and illustrated a deep knowledge of and enthusiasm for the history behind it.

It has been a real privilege to work on this project. While performing the research for this project was certainly interesting, all the more fulfilling was having the opportunity to work with Impact Arts. Being able to work closely with the young people and watching their interest in history blossom was a pleasure, and we would look forward to assisting with the realisation of a similar project in the future.

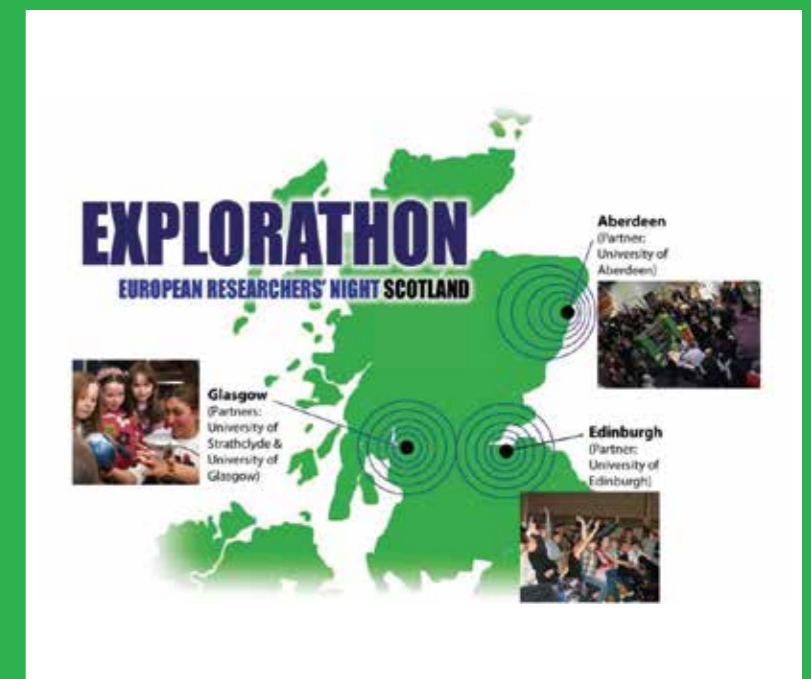
**Adrienne Miller and Iida Saarinen**  
PhD students, School of History,  
Classics and Archaeology, The University  
of Edinburgh

# EUROPEAN RESEARCHERS' NIGHT

The Beltane, working with the Universities of Aberdeen, Glasgow and Strathclyde, has won funding to be part of European Researchers' Night in 2014 and 2015.

Researchers' Night is a huge event involving around 300 European cities which takes place each September. The purpose of the Night is to give people a chance to find out what researchers really do, either by bringing them into universities or taking the researchers out to them. There is a special emphasis on sharing research funded by the European Commission.

Called "Explorathon", Researchers' Night Scotland 2014-15 will offer hands-on, interactive discussion, tours, visual arts and comedy events across three Scottish cities. In Edinburgh, there will be special editions of "PhD in an Hour", the "Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas" and Bright Club, a special 'steampunk science' event, and even a science ceilidh. Join in the fun on 26th September 2014 and 25th September 2015!



Want to get involved in Explorathon? Tell us what you want to do here:  
<http://www.beltanetwork.org/opportunities/eu-researchers-night/>



## REWARD AND RECOGNITION

Getting official recognition isn't the main reason most people try to engage others with research, but it helps with career progression and winning support for public engagement from managers.

The last few years have seen a number of members of the Beltane community rewarded or recognised for their public engagement work. For the Research Excellence Framework (REF), Beltane Fellow Antonella Sorace and Beltane funding recipient Chris Speed had their work submitted as impact case studies, and Beltane Fellows Jen Ross, Sue Fletcher-Watson, Nanette Mutrie, Liz Such, Karen Halliday and Mar Carmena had their work mentioned in the impact template for their subject areas, as did long-time friend of Beltane Sarah Keer-Keer. Royal Society of Edinburgh Prizes for Public Engagement, which Beltane co-founded and originally funded, were awarded to Chris Speed and Tom Devine (both from the University of Edinburgh), among others. Winners of Heriot-Watt University's own prize for public engagement have recently included Jenny Wood (a performer at the Beltane's "Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas"), Dorothy Hardy (friend of Beltane) and Laura Wicks (now working as one half of Heriot-Watt Engage).

As someone who has received one of the highest academic recognitions – the position of Chair – during his time working with Beltane, we asked Chris Speed how his public engagement has fitted into his career.

# RESEARCH, ENGAGEMENT, AND THINGS

## AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS SPEED



Chris Speed

Chris Speed became Chair of Design Informatics at the University of Edinburgh in 2013. He has a BA in Alternative Practice (Brighton Polytechnic, 1992), a Masters in Design (Goldsmiths 1999), and a PhD from Plymouth University ("A Social Dimension to Digital Architectural Practice", 2007).

We talk to Chris about his research, what public engagement means to him and what motivates him.

### What is your research about?

My research focuses upon the Network Society, Digital Art and Technology, and The Internet of Things. It's about making a critical enquiry into how network technology can engage with the fields of art, design and social experience through a variety of international digital art exhibitions, funded research projects, books, journals and conferences. My current funded projects are about the flow of food across cities, an internet of cars, turning printers into clocks and a persistent argument that chickens are actually robots.

### What exactly is an internet of cars?

It's a new form of networked transport where cars, people and places all talk to one another. Our current transport system hasn't really changed in 150 years – it's still ruled by clocks and timetables. Real-time networking could improve the experience for us all. Your train could text you to tell you when to leave the house to catch it!

### Why do you think research is important?

An academic career seems to me to be a commitment to life-long learning, and my learning is developed through a combination of teaching and research. Research has allowed me to continue to develop my understanding of the world and my contribution to its shape, agendas and values. Collaboration with many co-investigators across a wide variety of subjects including business, geography, computer science, law, economics, anthropology and architecture have transformed how I develop a vocabulary for my design based theory and practice.

### What does public engagement mean to you?

Articulating the development and results of this research to people outside of academia is a critical part of the life-long learning process. The reception and interpretation of the ideas and products (in the broadest sense of the word) is crucial in my understanding of how the research relates to society. In many cases, the research relies on the participation of people within the 'product' of the research – for example, use of experimental smartphone apps, or art/technology projects. Without engagement, both through the research and at the point of exposition, the research would be far less meaningful.

### Does public engagement have anything to do with the Research Excellence Framework (REF)?

Yes, it occurs to me that society's reception of the research should inform the assessment of 'Excellence' within the REF. Finding out whether your activities make sense to the broader public helps guide future work. Sometimes, we work in the near future, sometimes in the far future and it isn't easy to make the research easy to understand (all of the time), but learning how to tell stories that make the research understandable helps me develop ways of writing future funding applications.

### Who have you involved in your public engagement (internally and externally)?

For the TOTeM (Tales of Things and Electronic Memory) project, we worked with Oxfam. They found the project to be good publicity, and individual shops had spikes in their takings while we were there. I suppose a lot of what I do could be described as community engagement. For another project, "Community Hacking/Ladders to the Cloud", we worked with organisations and individuals in the west of Edinburgh: the Prospects Housing Association; WHALE Arts; the Wester Hailes social history archive; volunteer activist Eoghan Howard.

### Did you receive any support (training, encouragement) for this?

Yes, we received Beltane funding to run a workshop for the TOTeM project. The funding helped us engage with a particular group of people who were concerned about the concept of 'tagging' and personal identification systems. Through a day-long workshop, we were able to explore issues that were sensitive to the research and better understand how to use language within that didn't exclude members of the public.

### Where have you found the funding for your public engagement activities?

My engagement has been largely funded by the same grants that fund my interrelated research. I've had a number awards from some of the big UK Research Councils – AHRC, EPSRC and ESRC. I've also been able to secure cash from some smaller organisations, including SICSA Smart Tourism, JISC and the Arts Council of England.

### You hold the position of Chair at the University, which is quite an achievement. Do you think that being so involved in public engagement activities has helped or hindered your career progression?

One of the key things I'm interested in in my research is the social experience of technology. For that, you need people, so it's fair to say I couldn't have got where I am without being involved in engagement. The research creates the need for engagement which feeds more research. My university has recognised my engagement in its own right, too. It was one of the criteria on which I was promoted to Chair and in 2011 I received the Principal's Medal to recognise my community engagement work. In 2013 I was also awarded the Royal Society of Edinburgh Innovator's Prize for work with communities.

Find out more about Chris' work here: <http://www.eca.ed.ac.uk/school-of-design/chris-speed>





# WORKING WITH THE PARLIAMENT

Its work with the Scottish Parliament has been one of the Beltane's core activities since its very beginning. Scotland's Futures Forum, a think tank based at the Parliament, has been our key partner. The Forum was created by the Scottish Parliament to help its Members, along with policymakers, businesses, academics, and the wider community of Scotland, look beyond immediate horizons, to some of the challenges and opportunities we will face in the future.

## JEN ROSS

I can't say enough good things about my experience as a Beltane Fellow, working closely with Donald Jarvie and Scotland's Futures Forum in the Scottish Parliament. My understanding of public engagement, the policy sphere in Scotland, and the value of networking and collaborating beyond academia has been deepened, and my priorities and academic identity greatly impacted.

My Fellowship focused on online and distance learning in Scotland, and looked in particular at issues around MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses). I briefed Parliament colleagues about MOOCs, co-ordinated resources and activities to get them to explore these courses by signing up for one in early 2014, and worked with the Forum and the Learning and Leadership team to embed MOOCs as part of the professional development infrastructure of the Parliament. The MOOC strand culminated in a workshop in May 2014, bringing together groups of non-academic experts in four topic areas, including wellbeing and community energy, to discuss the potential for creating MOOCs for public engagement and knowledge exchange. These teams are now taking their ideas forward, with further input from me.

Two other strands of activity emerged during the Fellowship. The first involved discussions with the Shetland Learning Partnership, when Scotland's Futures Forum was asked to help plan scenarios for secondary, further, higher and adult education in Shetland. The second was a collaboration with the Forum to host a 'Creative Futures for Scotland' roundtable event exploring how the growing popularity of individual and collaborative creativity (for example, crafting, 3D printing and web coding) could impact on learning, innovation and wellbeing in Scotland.

All three areas of work are continuing beyond the end of the Fellowship. I greatly appreciate the support I've received from Beltane, Scotland's Futures Forum and the University of Edinburgh.

**Jen Ross**  
*Beltane Parliament Fellow, Lecturer and Programme Director: MSc Digital Education, School of Education, The University of Edinburgh*



## THE PARLIAMENT DINNERS

Once a year, in late spring, the Beltane and Scotland's Futures Forum co-host a dinner at the Scottish Parliament. The purpose of the event is to get MSPs, parliamentary researchers and senior members of universities to discuss – and, hopefully, take action on – a topic that is relevant to them both. Previous dinner topics have included: access to higher education; wellbeing in an ageing population; distance and online learning; mapping Parliament-university engagement.

"The Beltane Parliamentary working dinners provide a superb opportunity to support and enhance university/Parliament engagement on topics which are not party political in nature but which mutually improve understanding of long term issues and opportunities in the sphere of higher education."

**Donald Jarvie**  
*Head of Scotland's Futures Forum, The Scottish Parliament*

"The Scottish Parliament can only effectively scrutinise the Scottish Government if it has access to the most appropriate, timely and useful information. Researchers are working on such material all the time – but the Parliament may not know about it – so building those bridges is crucial, and can add to the democratic process."

**Graeme Cook**  
*Head of Research & Enquiries, The Scottish Parliament*



## PARLIAMENT FELLOWSHIPS

Beltane Parliament Fellowships are an unprecedented opportunity to share knowledge with policymakers.

"There is no better way to exchange knowledge than for someone to spend time physically based in your workplace. We have been delighted to welcome researchers from Edinburgh's universities into the Parliament. The Beltane Parliament Fellowships have a legacy that far outlasts the funded period or specific topic of the Fellowship. Fellows leave with a wealth of understanding and contacts that stand them in good stead for policy engagement throughout their careers. We know that Fellows happily share this expertise with their academic colleagues, too, hence multiplying the value of the Fellowships. This can only benefit those of us here at the Parliament."

**Donald Jarvie**  
*Head of Scotland's Futures Forum, The Scottish Parliament*



# FACTS AND FIGURES

During phase two (August 2012–July 2014), Beltane has:

6,705

Had over 6,705\* researchers to encourage and support to engage



Boosted its database to 191 members

191

31



Grown its number of Fellows to 31 researchers across six universities

692

Built its mailing list up to 692 addresses



Served roughly 80 ice creams!

80

14

Recruited 14 academics and public representatives to its advisory group



10

Had 10 different MSPs at our events



3

Been part of 3 successful external funding applications



1

Had 1 overarching ethos of making our member universities' research accessible to a wide variety of people



Increased its Twitter followers to 2,152



2,152

Recorded 184 official email enquiries (but dealt with many more)



184

Sold over 850 tickets to Edinburgh Fringe shows (and counting)



850

Curated 47 shows for the "Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas" at the Edinburgh Fringe



47

11

Run 11 Beltane Breakfast and Twilight networking sessions



Shared 6 kilos of sweets!



6

Supported 4 university partners



4

Employed 2 enthusiastic but often exhausted people



2

800

Offered over 800 training places at 43 courses



Woken people up with around 100 bacon rolls!



100

\* Based on the 2008 RAE submission numbers for our four university partners  
† Because food is essential for creating communities



“A space to be innovative, away from the necessary but sometimes restrictive pressures of academic life, ensures progress in public engagement practice.”

**Heather Rea**

*Project Lead, Beltane Public Engagement Network*



# LOOKING FORWARD

Engagement with the Scottish Parliament has been part of the Beltane from its 2008 beginning. We are fortunate to be in Scotland at a crucial point in its history when its people decide for or against independence. As an emotionally-charged debate, independence is challenging from an engagement perspective, but also offers great potential. We have seen the creation of the ESRC-funded, University of Edinburgh-led “The Future of the UK and Scotland” project; this is supporting engagement with research in the run up to, in the wake of, the referendum with a large programme of activities. Meanwhile, the Beltane’s relationship with the Parliament has continued to develop, most recently resulting in a highly successful 2014 Parliament dinner where senior academics, MSPs and parliamentary researchers discussed ways to improve the flow of evidence from researchers to Scotland’s political decision-makers. We have a University of Edinburgh political science master’s student working with the Beltane to put some of these plans into action.

At the 2014 Beltane Annual Gathering, Charlie Jeffery, Vice Principal (Public Policy and Impact) at the University of Edinburgh spent time observing the interactions of the evening and gave the closing talk. He pointed out that the main appeal of the Beltane appeared to be its willingness to be ‘wacky’. Far from being frivolous, this gives researchers the freedom to try something new, risking failure, while being supported and without risk of negative repercussions.

A space to be innovative, away from the necessary but sometimes restrictive pressures of academic life, ensures progress in public engagement practice. I hope that the Beltane ethos will continue and, with it, the freedom for both researchers and public engagement staff to develop skills and techniques.

Once again, the Beltane is entering a time of transition, its second phase of funding coming to an end in the summer of 2015. In phase three, the Beltane intends to continue to create novel, interesting engagement platforms while still working hard to ensure that engagement with research becomes part of the routine life of universities. Meanwhile, I invite you all to make the most of the Beltane in the year to come!

**Heather Rea**

*Project Lead, Beltane Public Engagement Network*



*Heather Rea*



## IMAGE ATTRIBUTIONS:

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For TEDx image on page 7

**Mary Bownes**

For landscape images on pages 1, 5, 32 and 33

**Bright Club Edinburgh**

For images of Bright Club Edinburgh on page 23

**Yao Hui and Gather Festival**

“Tai Chi & Chai Tea”, page 18

**Just Festival**

For image of “PhD in an Hour”, page 24

**Karsten Moerman**

For image of Jon Turner on page 4

**Sarah Muir**

For image of ice cream on page 8

**Euan Myles**

For image of Lesley McAra, page 4

**Douglas Roberston**

For most other images of Beltane events and University of Edinburgh staff

**Christina Saunders**

For picture of Sophia and Ross on page 24

**Allan Shedlock**

For image on page 21

**Ken Skeldon**

For Researchers’ Night image on page 25

**Denisa Tomkova**

For “Café des Artistes” image on page 7



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Photo by Maverick Photography  
*Exhibition at St Andrew Square*

Cover photo by Nina Rzechorzek  
and Siddharthan Chandran.  
*Human Circuits in a Dish*

The ability to examine brain cells in a dish has greatly expanded our knowledge on how synapses form. With the development of human stem cell technologies, the neuronal superhighway can now be studied using human neurons that have been generated from stem cells. This picture, taken with a fluorescent microscope, shows neurons (in Purple) derived from human embryonic stem cells.

This image of was originally produced for "The Brain is Wider than The Sky" exhibition in St Andrews Square, Edinburgh, 7 June – 14 July 2014. The exhibit was collaboration between researchers from the University of Edinburgh's Patrick Wild Centre for Research into Autism, Fragile X Syndrome and Intellectual Disabilities and the Scottish charity Mindroom.

"These images are simply too beautiful to be hidden away in a lab. They were created to further our understanding of the brain but they can also be viewed as stunning examples of abstract art. Our hope is that people admiring the pictures on show will also come away with a greater awareness of what it means to be affected by learning difficulties and other brain conditions."

**Sophie Dow**  
*Founder, Mindroom*